

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 SAM-01 SAB-01 SCCT-01 CU-02 AID-05

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3688

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN, GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2198

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

USCINCEUR ALSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, IZ, SU

SUBJECT: SYRIAN-IRAQI DISPUTE

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN SECURITY AUTHORITIES ARRESTED SUDANESE STUDENT ON SUSPICION OF WORKING FOR IRAQIS BUT HE LATER RELEASED. IRAQIS HAVE BEEN MORE REASONABLE AND RESTRAINED THAN SYRIANS IN THEIR PUBLIC APPROACH TO DISPUTE. SYRIAN MFA DEMANDING GOI ARREST ASSAILANTS OF SARG MILITARY ATTACHE STATIONED BAGHDAD. SYRIA PUBLISHED FURTHER LIST OF EXECUTIONS IN IRAQ. IRAQIS CLAIM THEY NOT RECEIVING WATERS SUPPOSEDLY RELEASED FROM SYRIAN "SHARE" OF EUPHRATES. ONE OBSERVER BELIEVES SYRIANS GENERATING CRISIS IN ORDER FORCE SADDAM HUSSEIN ACCEPT PERMANENCE OF ASAD REGIME.
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SYRIAN PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST IRAQ SHOWS NO SIGNS

OF ABATING. END SUMMARY.

2. FBIS JN292030Y OF MAY 29 REPORTED IRAQI ACCUSATION THAT SYRIAN AUTHORITIES HAD ARRESTED SUDANESE STUDENT WHO ALLEGEDLY MEMBER OF IRAQI WING OF BAAATH PARTY AND WHO CRITICIZED SYRIAN STANCE ON EUPHRATES WATERS DISPUTE. JUNE 3 FBIS JN031644Y REPORTED DENIAL OF CHARGES ISSUED BY SUDANESE STUDENTS UNION IN SYRIA. SUDANESE EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY TOLD EMBOFF JUNE 10 THAT STUDENT WAS INTERROGATED BY SARG SECURITY SERVICE AND LATER RELEASED. APPARENTLY SECURITY BECAME SUSPICIOUS OF STUDENT'S FREE SPENDING WAYS, TRIPS TO BEIRUT AND POSSESSION OF FORBIDDEN BOOKS AND SUSPECTED THAT HE CONNECTED WITH IRAQIS. STUDENT WAS ABLE TO PROVE MONEY CAME FROM PARENTS, HE HAD MADE ONLY TWO TRIPS TO BEIRUT AND HE UNAWARE OF RESTRICTIONS ON WRITTEN MATERIAL HE POSSESSED. IN ANY CASE HE NOW BACK AT DAMASCUS UNIVERSITY. SUDANESE EMBOFF STATED CASE CLOSED TO SATISFACTION OF SARG AND GOS.

3. JUNE 4 AN-NAHAR PRINTED FULL-PAGE AD PLACED BY IRAQI EMBASSY BEIRUT EXPLAINING IRAQI SIDE OF DISPUTE. RESTRAINED IN TONE, AD ADMITTED "PRESENCE OF A PROFOUND CONFLICT BETWEEN US AND THE SYRIAN RULERS EXTENDING BACK TO 1966 WHEN THEY CARRIED OUT THEIR MILITARY COUP AGAINST LEGITIMATE PARTY AUTHORITY." AD CONCLUDED BY PLACING QUESTION OF DISPUTE BEFORE ARAB WORLD "TO JUDGE AND DECIDE."

4. JUNE 6 AL-BAATH PUBLISHED INTERVIEW WITH LEBANESE DEPUTY NAJAH WAKIM IN WHICH WAKIM ACCUSED IRAQ OF FABRICATING MARGINAL BATTLE AGAINST SYRIA AND THEREBY DETRACTING FROM CENTRAL ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT.

5. JUNE 9 DAMASCUS PRESS PRINTED REPORT CITING MFA SOURCE THAT SYRIAN MFA HAD SUMMONED IRAQI AMBASSADOR TO DAMASCUS TO DEMAND EXPLANATION WHY GOI HAD NOT DISCOVERED "PERSONS WHO ATTACKED SYRIAN MILITARY ATTACHE IN BAGHDAD."

6. JUNE 10 BEIRUT DAILY ORIENT LE JOUR PUBLISHED STATEMENT BY IRAQ IRRIGATION MINISTER TALBANI CLAIMING THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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IRAQ HAD NOT RECEIVED WATER SUPPOSEDLY RELEASED FROM SYRIA'S SHARE OF EUPHRATES WATERS (DAMASCUS 2091). "THE WATER WHICH IRAQ HAS NOT RECEIVED CAN BE FOUND IN THE LAKE BEHIND THE TABQA DAM," HE STATED. (NOTE. ON JUNE 11 ITALIAN EMBOFF TOLD US THAT A EUPHRATES DAM MINISTRY OFFICIAL HAD RECENTLY ADMITTED TO HIM THAT SYRIANS WERE WITHHOLDING EUPHRATES WATERS AND THAT LAKE ASAD HAD MORE THAN ENOUGH WATER.)

7. JUNE 10 DAMASCUS PAPERS PUBLISHED NEW LIST OF NAMES OF IRAQIS SANA CLAIMED EXECUTED BY REGIME. LIST SIGNIFICANTLY INCLUDES TWO SHIA RELIGIOUS LEADERS FROM NEJAF, NINE IRAQI COMMUNISTS, SOME MILITARY OFFICERS AND ABD AL-KHALIQ AL-SAMIRRA'I, IDENTIFIED AS FORMER RCC MEMBER.

8. AUB PROFESSOR WHO HAS PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION THREE-VOLUME WORK ON MODERN IRAQI POLITICS TOLD EMBOFF JUNE 7 THAT HE BELIEVES SYRIA GENERATING CRISIS AS WARNING TO SADDAM HUSSEIN THAT TIME HAS COME FOR REGIME TO DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM SYRIAN EXILES AND ACCEPT PERMANENCE OF ASAD RULE IN SYRIA. PROFESSOR SAID HE WAS CERTAIN THAT IRAQIS HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY INTERFERING IN SYRIAN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, AND ADDED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD SOME DISCONTENTED SYRIAN SUNNIS WITH NO IRAQI CONNECTION HAD SUSPENDED THEIR OPPOSITIONIST ACTIVITIES BECAUSE THEY FEARED BEING CAUGHT IN CROSSFIRE OF SYRIAN-IRAQI ANIMOSITY.

9. COMMENT: SYRIAN LIST OF IRAQIS EXECUTED SEEMS INTENDED TO IMPLY THAT SADDAM FACING WIDESPREAD DISCONTENT FROM SHIA, COMMUNIST AND MILITARY ELEMENTS IN IRAQ. SARG STILL HAMMERING AWAY ON DAILY BASIS AGAINST IRAQI REGIME, INDICATING THAT BASIC POLITICAL DISPUTE STILL NOT SOLVED EVEN THROUGH SYRIA CLAIMS IT IS NOW PERMITTING WATERS FROM ITS "SHARE" TO REACH IRAQ. PELLETREAU

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